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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR MARCH 21, 2006

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for March 21, 2006. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

HURRIYET / RADIKAL: President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, President of the Turkish Parliament, PM Tayyip Erdogan, CHP National Leader Deniz Baykal, Motherland Party National Leader Erkan Mumcu, DYP National Leader Mehmet Agar, separately extended Newroz greetings and gave messages supporting unity and solidarity.

OZGUR GUNDEM / EVRENSEL: Final round of Newroz celebrations will be held in Diyarbakir. (Note: The daily refers to Diyarbakir as "Amed", its Kurdish name. End Note.) It is reportedly expected that one million people will be attending the event. Kars and Van provinces will also be celebrating Newroz today. Celebrations in Van and in its Dogubeyazit district were held until late the previous night. Police intervened and opened fire in the air when a group of people danced around fire and chanted pro-Ocalan slogans in a quarter of Van. Police reportedly had to retreat because of its disadvantaged physical position in the place. A big place in the main square of Diyarbakir has been reserved for the Newroz fire in Diyarbakir. Hundreds of delegations and parliamentarians from abroad will reportedly attend the event. Hundreds of transportation vehicles will carry people to the site of the celebrations. Meanwhile, Hege Reinskou, a Norwegian delegation member, has reportedly been detained by the Turkish police as she was crossing the Habur border gate in Sirnak to attend Newroz celebrations held at the Qandil Mountain in Iraq on charges of making terrorist propaganda and shouting unlawful slogans in last year's Newroz celebrations.

OZGUR GUNDEM / EVRENSEL: The daily Ozgur Gundem points out to the frustrations of people in Semdinli regarding attempts by the local authorities in Hakkari's Semdinli district to ban Newroz celebrations. Authorities are blamed for trying to cancel in the first place the celebrations, and then trying to postpone celebration day to March 21st. People of Semdinli reportedly decided not to hold celebrations in their district as a result of that, and traveled to Cukurca district to celebrate Newroz there. The daily reports that more than 30,000 people attended the event in Hakkari's Yuksekova district. The daily further reports details from celebrations in Mardin's Derik and Nusaybin, Diyarbakir's Silvan, Adiyaman's Kahta, Siirt's Kurtalan and Hatay's Erzin districts. An 8-person Italian delegation will attend the events that will be held in Nusaybin. The delegation will be visiting DTP branches, municipalities, civil society members, and unions in the region.

YENI SAFAK: Yeni Safak daily reported that two German nationals attending Newroz celebrations in Hakkari's Yuksekova district carried and wore fabric that had colors signifying the PKK. Following deciphering of footage from the festivities, police will file complaints against foreign nationals if they make terrorist propaganda and shout pro-PKK slogans. Meanwhile, the daily reported that three delegations comprised of 22 citizens from assorted countries took part in the festival in Hakkari.

BOLGE / RADIKAL: Security measures have also been heightened in Adana province ahead of Newroz celebrations. Provincial Culture and Tourism Directorate will be holding an alternative festival today near the Sabanci Mosque and Adana Governor will also participate in the event. Radikal daily reported that tension developed during Newroz celebrations in Adana. In some sections of the province, youth burned tires and stopped traffic flow the previous night. Police dispersed the crowd using teargas. Some of the demonstrators were detained. Meanwhile, 18 of 26 demonstrators detained during an unauthorized demonstration in Sanliurfa, whose ages are under 18, have been released and will stand trial without being arrested.

YENI SAFAK / HURRIYET / OZGUR GUNDEM / EVRENSEL / BOLGE / CUMHURİYET / RADIKAL: General Staff rejected recent accusations placed against Land Forces Commander Yasar Buyukanit in the Semdinli indictment prepared by Prosecutor Ferhat Sarikaya. General Staff severely dismissed any demands to open an investigation against the Commander, and filed a complaint against Sarikaya. Meanwhile, two inspectors from Ministry of Justice, conducting a probe against Ferhat Sarikaya in the Van Court Hall for ten days, have returned to Ankara and will start working on a report on that.

HURRIYET / RADIKAL: A lawsuit has been brought against the farmer (43) who protested PM Erdogan in a February 10-dated visit Erdogan made to Mersin. The indictment claims that the defendant made insulting and disrespectful remarks to the PM that denigrated PM as an individual.

HURRIYET (CUKUROVA): Adana was portrayed as a region having the best economic potential for investments in Foreign Direct Investment journal of the Financial Times newspaper.
HURRIYET (CUKUROVA) / BOLGE / RADIKAL: Ambassador Hansjorg Kretschmer, President of European Commission Delegation to Turkey, participated in the EU Communication Network Seminar in Adana and advised European Corner staff members to extend information to people about Europe.

HURRIYET ONLINE: Reportedly, at least 10,000 people attended the Newruz celebrations in Diyarbakir today. Demonstrators in the venue of the festival carried flags of the PKK and Abdullah Ocalan. When some of the demonstrators objected to being searched by the police before entering the venue of the festival, tension developed and demonstrators hurled stones at the police. Six police officers were reportedly wounded as a result of the incident. One police officer has reportedly been wounded during the demonstrations in Sirnak's Silopi district today. Meanwhile, Hurriyet's online newspaper reported that foreign press including German's ARD, Japan's NHK, and Britain's BBC has also been watching the festival activities.
REID